

Testimony of Penny Lore

Administrator of Parsonage Cottage Senior Residence

Re: H.B. No. 5037 (COMM) AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE
BIENNIUM

ENDING JUNE 30, 2023

Concerning

Department of Social Services Budget-Residential Care Home Funding

Appropriations Subcommittee on Human Services Public Hearing, February 23, 2022

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France, and Members of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Human Services, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on the Department of Social Services Budget related Residential Care Home Funding.

My name is Penny Lore. I am the administrator for Parsonage Cottage Senior Residence in Greenwich Connecticut. Parsonage Cottage is a 40-bed residential care facility. Our population is the frail elderly who may not need skilled nursing services but can no longer live independently at home. Most of our residents are funded through the State's AABD Medicaid program.

The services we provide are, medication administration, health, and wellness, including bathing and dressing, bed changing, laundry, housekeeping, social services, counseling, therapeutic recreation, coordination of medical appointments and transportation, all meals, and snacks and 24-hour staffing.

Throughout COVID, our residents were on various levels of isolation. They were lonely, faced with death and dying, and worst of all dying alone. This took an emotional and physical toll on them requiring more hands-on care from our staff.

Last year's biennium budget included a transfer of some residential care home spending to Medicaid. This shift was done to save the state money and provide residential care homes with much-needed resources. The plan is for residential care homes to become Medicaid billers beginning April 1, 2022.

Our Association has had several meetings with the Department of Social Services to discuss and facilitate the Medicaid billing plan. However, to date, there has been no operationalized plan for residential care homes to become Medicaid billers. **These funds are critically important to our homes and employees who have been counting on the increased revenue to deal with the impact of the pandemic. We would urge the Appropriations Committee to ensure these dollars go to increasing residential care home rates!**

We value our employees who deserve so much more for the work they do for our elderly community. At the start of the COVID shut down our contracted cleaning crew quit immediately, leaving the additional burden of cleaning to all staff remaining. Issues of childcare, school

closures and fear of their own health and family's health took an emotional and physical toll on them as well. Their dedication was exceptional, while their compensation was minimal. And, furthermore, amidst all the pandemic anxieties, they were required to be vaccinated or face termination regardless of their positions.

Unfortunately, paying employees wages to attract new people to our industry is difficult, resulting in high employee turnover. Our industry strives to employ people in long term careers so that they can establish and maintain relationships with our residents. Continuity of care is essential for better long-term health outcomes and aging in place. This can also prolong or prevent admission to a nursing home saving the State at least half of the cost of a nursing home.

The inconsistent funding also challenges our business operations. Due to the pandemic, our cleaning costs have more than doubled. Additionally, supplies, food and all facility costs, repairs, improvements have increased immensely. Subsequently, we are operating a loss. Without the financial support of the Greenwich Housing Authority's discretionary funds, we would not be able to service our community. As a result, Parsonage Cottage's viability is an ongoing financial concern.

Unlike other providers during the pandemic, we did not see any federal funding to support our work or our employees. The Governor's proposal to enable residential care homes to bill Medicaid acknowledges the need for higher rates. We provide a critical service for the state and care for some of the most vulnerable population. We do this for a low cost. Most of our residents are state funded limiting our ability to cost shift and make up for low rates. My home and other residential care homes throughout the state have had to survive with rates failing to keep up with expenses.

Please support residential care home funding so that we can retain our wonderful and dedicated employees and pay them fairer wages as they care for the most vulnerable in the state.

Penny Lore, Administrator

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